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DRAFT RECOVERY PLAN PUBLISHED FOR LISTED SPECIES OF THE ROGUE VALLEY VERNAL POOL AND ILLINOIS VALLEY WET MEADOW ECOSYSTEMS

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service today released a draft recovery plan for federally listed threatened and endangered species found in Oregon's Illinois Valley Wet Meadow and Rogue Valley Vernal Pool ecosystems. In releasing this draft, the Service opens a 60-day public comment period that ends November 21, 2006.

This ecosystem-based recovery plan contains recovery objectives for the threatened Vernal pool fairy shrimp and a strategy to guide the recovery of two endangered plants, Cook's lomatium (Cook's desert parsley) and large-flowered woolly meadowfoam. Additionally, the plan provides for the long term conservation of ten additional plants and animals that are associated with seasonal wetlands in southwestern Oregon. These include Henderson's bentgrass, coral-seeded popcornflower, dwarf woolly meadowfoam, slender meadowfoam, Tehama navarretia, Austin's popcornflower, sculptured allocarya, and Greene's popcornflower and a newly discovered aquatic invertebrate species, the Agate Desert water flea.

A strategy for recovering the threatened vernal pool fairy shrimp was addressed in the Recovery Plan for Vernal Pool Ecosystems of California and Southern Oregon that was published on March 7, 2006.

All species included in the recovery plan are endemic to seasonally wet habitats in southwestern Oregon and are threatened by habitat loss due to urban development, off-road vehicle damage, competition from native and non-native plants, and roadside mowing and spraying. Eleven species occur within the Agate Desert of the Rogue River Valley plains in Jackson County and are associated with vernal pools. Slender meadowfoam and Cook's lomatium can be found in the Illinois Valley of neighboring Josephine County. The majority of the known sites for the two federally listed plant species occur in the Rogue Valley.

The recovery plan recommends that vernal pools and wet meadows in the region be protected from development and managed or restored to maintain or improve their habitat quality. It is also necessary to survey and monitor populations of these species, conduct research on biology and management of the species, and enhance public awareness and participation in their recovery. The endangered plants addressed in this recovery plan could recover sufficiently to be removed from the endangered species list by 2026. The estimated cost of implementing recovery actions over 20 years is \$2,613,000, plus additional costs that cannot be estimated at this time.

Cook's lomatium is a six- to 20-inch long perennial plant that produces several clusters of pale yellow flowers during the spring and boat-shaped seeds during the early summer. The leaves are smooth, inter-divided and glossy bluish-green. This plant grows in and around vernal pools and adjacent mounds at several localities within the Agate Desert of the Rogue River Valley. Several populations also occur in wet meadow habitats of the Illinois Valley in Josephine County. Populations in the Illinois Valley occur on patches of Bureau of Land Management and private land while populations in the Rogue Valley occur primarily on private land with five occurring on State managed lands.

The large-flowered woolly meadowfoam has cream-colored flowers that appear as whitish foam in springtime when growing around the vernal pools of Jackson County's Agate Desert. The hairy flowering plants appear in vernal pools during the spring, grow to six inches tall, and then die by early summer. The plant is found only in the vicinity of White City, Medford, and Eagle Point in Jackson County. Fifteen of the 26 populations are on private land, while the remaining ten populations are on State managed lands.

Native plants are important for their ecological, economic, and aesthetic values. Plants play an important role in development of crops that resist disease, insects, and drought. At least 25 percent of prescription drugs contain ingredients derived from plant compounds, including medicine used to treat cancer, heart disease, juvenile leukemia, and malaria, as well as that used to assist organ transplants. Plants are also used to develop natural pesticides.

The goal of the Endangered Species Act is to recover listed species to the point where they are secure, self-sustaining members of their ecosystems and no longer need federal protection. A recovery plan is a blueprint providing guidance for actions by federal, state and other public agencies and private interests that will lead to the recovery and delisting of a species. Recovery plans are advisory only. They do not obligate the expenditure of funds or require that the recommended actions be implemented.

Like all recovery plans written under the Endangered Species Act, this plan is not regulatory, but simply provides guidance on how land managers can achieve recovery of the endangered species. The plan suggests criteria to use in determining when the species will be recovered, and no longer need the protections of the law. It lists actions needed to achieve recovery and projects costs of those actions.

The availability of the draft recovery plan for a 60-day public comment period was announced in the *Federal Register* on Friday, September 22, 2006. Copies of the draft recovery plan are available through the Fish and Wildlife Service's website at <http://www.fws.gov/oregonfwo/index.asp>, or by calling the Fish and Wildlife Service's Roseburg Field Office at 541-957-3474. Written or electronic comments must be received on or before November 21, 2006. Address written comments to the Field Supervisor, Roseburg Field Office, 2900 NW Stewart Parkway, Roseburg, Oregon 97470, or send electronic comments to fw1vernalpoolmeadowrecoveryplan@fws.gov

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is the principal Federal agency responsible for conserving, protecting and enhancing fish, wildlife and plants and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people. The Service manages the 95-million-acre National Wildlife Refuge System which encompasses 542 national wildlife refuges, thousands of small wetlands and other special management areas. It also operates 70 national fish hatcheries, 64 fishery resource offices and 81 ecological services field stations. The agency enforces Federal wildlife laws, administers the Endangered Species Act, manages migratory bird populations, restores nationally significant fisheries, conserves and restores wildlife habitat such as wetlands, and helps foreign governments with their conservation efforts. It also oversees the Federal Aid program that distributes hundreds of millions of dollars in excise taxes on fishing and hunting equipment to state fish and wildlife agencies.

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The [Oregon Fish and Wildlife Office](#), the [Pacific Regional Office](#), or the [National Home Page](#).